

Elgin Public Library

Unattended and Disruptive Children Policy

The staff of the Elgin Public Library strives to create a warm, inviting, educational and fun environment for children. The library offers programs and services that encourage children to develop a love of books, reading and learning. The safety and well being of children at the library is of serious concern. It is the intention of this policy to enlist the cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children to ensure that the Elgin Public Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it.

Parents or caregivers are responsible for the behavior of their children while they are in the Library and on Library property. The Elgin Public Library staff is committed to helping children with activities related to the Library. However, the Library staff is unable to monitor children for any length of time. Violations of the Library's Code of Conduct are grounds for suspension of library privileges. Whenever necessary, the Library will notify the parent of incidents involving an unattended or disruptive child.

Unattended Children

Children age 7 or under must be accompanied by a responsible adult or caregiver 16 years or older while in the library. (Accompanied is defined as "within sight".) Children are to be accompanied by someone who can take responsibility should an emergency occur. Children who are participating in a children's program at the library may attend without an adult or caregiver, provided that the library has a written registration with a contact phone number for a parent/guardian.

Responsibility for the welfare and the behavior of children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned caregiver. Though staff will always respond with care and concern, they cannot assume responsibility for children's safety and comfort when they are unattended. Staff may need to contact authorities such as the Sheriff's Department either to assist with the enforcement of discipline in the library or to ensure the safety of an unattended child.

For the safety of all Library patrons, children must be sufficiently mature before being allowed to visit the Library by themselves. The Library is not responsible for the care and supervision of unaccompanied children prior to opening or after closing. The Library is not responsible for children outside the building who await transportation or who are socializing. Adults responsible for children using the Library should be aware of the Library's hours and make arrangements to meet the children on time.

This is a particular concern in inclement weather and after dark. All children need to have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency. When the safety of an unattended child is in doubt, or the parent or responsible caregiver cannot

be located, or if the Library is closing, library staff is authorized to contact the Sheriff's Department.

Teenagers are treated as adult users. However, they are still legally the responsibility of their parents and need to have an emergency contact available.

Disruptive Children

Disruptive Behavior is considered to be behavior that represents physical danger to the child or others, or behavior that interferes with other library users or staff. Disruptive behavior is behavior that is inappropriate in a library setting. Disruptive behavior that is unacceptable in the Library includes, but is not limited to:

- Running, chasing, horseplay
- Screaming, shouting, yelling, loud laughing or other noise
- Abusive or excessive uses of the courtesy phone for calls other than to parents or guardians.
- Abnormal, erratic behavior that hinders normal library use
- Continued or frequent loud talking in study areas
- Pushing, hitting, fighting, biting
- Throwing books or other objects
- Prolonged crying or temper tantrums
- Bullying or bothering other people
- Jumping on furniture
- Dangerous use of toys

The Library will provide reasonable accommodation to individuals with disabilities.

Library staff will approach disruptive children in the following manner:

Give a verbal warning to the child indicating that such behavior is disruptive to other library users and is unacceptable.

If the disruptive behavior continues, approach the parent or guardian with the same warning. If the child is unattended, give the child a second warning.

If the disruptive behavior continues, request the parent or guardian to escort the child from the library premises. Unattended disruptive children, older than 7 years may be asked to leave the library after one warning. In such instances, parents may be contacted or, if the parent is unavailable, the Sheriff's Department may be contacted.